

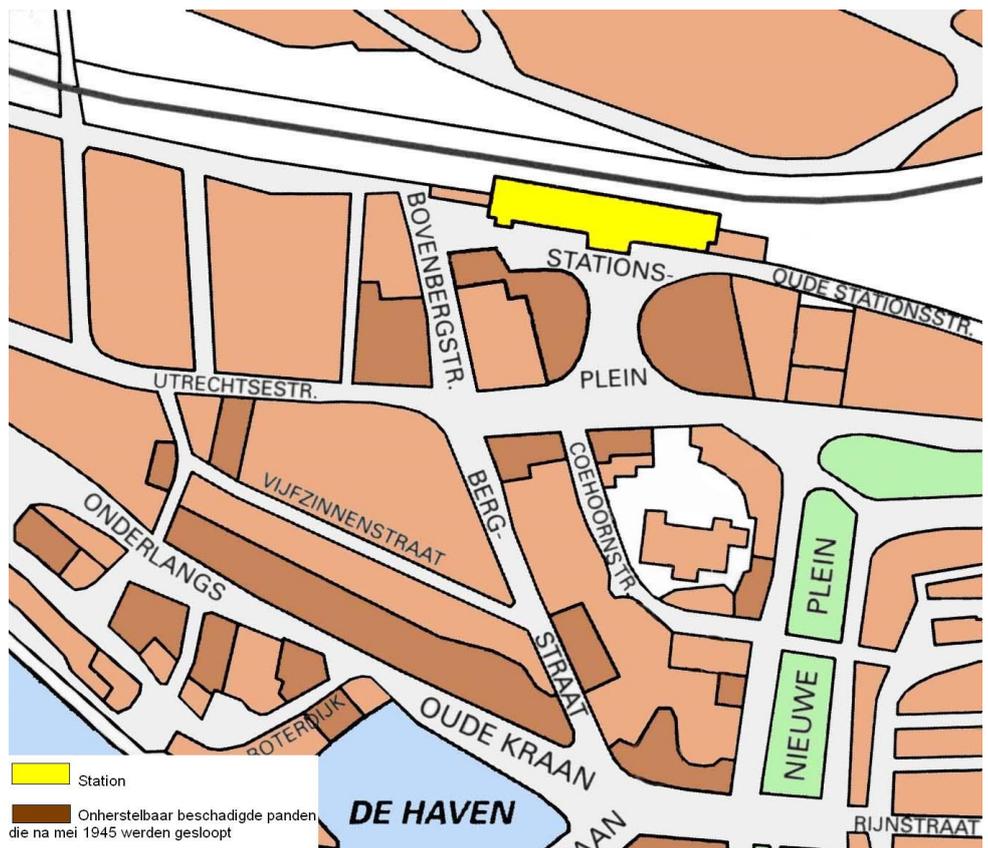
01 Station

During the war years the Central Station in Arnhem was made use of in various ways and stood as a symbol for a number of incidents. It began and ended with destruction, initially by railway personnel themselves (May 1940) and by shellfire in 1945. In between times evacuation trains from the coastal region arrived, Jews were forcibly taken by rail to concentration camps, and Germans carried out raids for the Arbeitseinsatz. The rail-strike which started on 17 September 1944 led to Dutch personnel and equipment being replaced by that of the eastern neighbours. Memorials remember the time but one of the two is temporarily out of view.



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The Stations Square before 1940, with the station building in the background. (Gelders Archive, General Photo collection, negative B 140/2)



Destruction in May 1940

On May 10 1940 the Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS – Dutch Railways) management contacted Station Masters by telephone and telegraph with the order to carry out acts of destruction to stations and emplacements. These had been prepared with an eye to possible hostilities, and now that there was a real threat of a German invasion of the Netherlands the plans were implemented. Besides Arnhem, installations in Zwolle, Amersfoort, Eindhoven, Leeuwarden, Groningen, Onnen, De Vork, Ressen-Bemmel and Deventer were destroyed by NS personnel. [1]

“Led by chief-clerk Ravenbergen[2] a group went into the yard with the aim of causing damage, including driving over open points. A locomotive (...) was driven onto the turntable to the east of the station. Emergency electrician G. Pijkeren saw from his house[3] that goods trains on the Arnhem shunting-yard ‘De Berg’ were split up and then smashed into one another. This resulted in a rail blockage in which goods wagons were piled three high. After the Germans arrived they had the havoc cleared up in just a few days. Wagon master D. Dekker arrived at the emplacement at about 10.00 hours and remembers: “On Arnhem station everything seems to be empty. But in ‘De Berg’ station clerk Pietersma and a few shunters are working hard at bringing about extreme destruction. Using a locomotive (...) they are busy at a shunted section of about 25 goods wagons, disconnecting them one by one and then smashing them into goods wagons standing in a dead-end siding. Among the goods carried in the wagons are “Turmac” tobacco products, which are scattered everywhere. For me, as a railway man, this is a dreadful sight. A wagon shunter from the electric traction depot walking next to me begins to cry. A few hours later the depot is taken over by German rail workers.”[4]

Emergency electrician G. Pijkeren sees that the Germans themselves clear away the derailed goods wagons in the ‘De Berg’ shunting yard.

“Some rolling stock with broken axles cannot be put back on the tracks so the Germans just dump them next to the railway line. Clearing the derailments takes eleven days.”[5]

Other Arnhem station NS employees also reported the destruction. Such as supervisor E.A. Bolte:

“Then we were given the order to wreck the whole lot. Just behind my house you have, I reckon, 12 tracks with English points radiating diagonally across (...). Now, we set up a train section there. At that point the emplacement still has a bit of a slope from the Utrecht direction to the station. We then took a big section up the slope and, on all the tracks, broke sections off and let them run down. Finally they were piled three on top of one another. Everything as sweet as a nut. (.....) And so we went on until the whole lot was smashed, so they couldn’t begin anywhere.”[6]

Increase in rail traffic

Train travel increased enormously in the war years. Travellers were obliged to take the train because of the scarcity of petrol and the commandeering of cars and buses. The number of rail passengers would more than double between 1940 and 1943, rising from 95 million to 232 million per year.[7]



Rail travellers, including German soldiers, on the Central Station platform during the Second World War.
(Dutch Railway Museum collection)

Evacuation trains from the coastal region

In the autumn of 1942 the coastal region of the Netherlands was evacuated. The Germans began building the Atlantic Wall. This defence line, running from France to Norway, was supposed to prevent an allied invasion. This led to a mass evacuation of the coast, starting in the autumn of 1942.

135,000 inhabitants of The Hague alone were forced to leave their homes. The houses concerned were demolished and replaced by defence works. 44 other municipalities were also entirely or partially affected. Inhabitants in the areas to be cleared and who were taking part in the construction process, the so-called WAPers, were accommodated elsewhere in the surroundings. The other people, the so-called NAPers, were evacuated to other parts of the Netherlands. In order to house the WAPers, NAPers living in districts not directly affected by the defence line had to leave their homes.^[8] Many of the NAPers themselves found accommodation in other places in the country. They were mainly elderly folk and incomplete families among them who were considered incapable. Mainly elderly folk and incomplete families among them were not able to do so on their own.^[9]

“Hospital patients and occupants of homes for the elderly were moved, complete with personnel etc, to other homes or adapted castles and stately homes. In January and February 1943 the people in the psychiatric institutions in Rosenberg and Bloemendaal at Loosduinen were moved to various homes in Zutphen, Zuid Laren, Wolfheze and Rosmalen. Most of the inhabitants of the Haagse Rusthuizen went to the Achterhoek, Wolfheze, Ellecom, Arnhem and Oosterbeek.” ^[10]

So-called evacuation trains were used for this purpose. Transport and nursing columns from the Red Cross helped with these removals. In the period from November 1942 up to March 1943 a total of 99 evacuation trains left, including 52 from The Hague.^[11] Helpers from the Red Cross at the places of evacuation took care of the boarding of buses and cars for transport to the stations of departure, getting off the buses and out of the cars once there, and boarding the trains. They also cared for the evacuees on the trains. Helpers from the local branch of the Red Cross were waiting at the stations of arrival, ready for the reception and transport of the arrivals to their various designated homes. This was a regular occurrence at Arnhem too, not only at the station in the centre but elsewhere in the city surroundings as well.

“In the winter of 42/43 when, at short notice, many large institutions in the west of the country were evacuated, the inhabitants were accommodated in buildings in the East and South of the Netherlands. Transport of these patients (...) by ambulance-train was further organized at the station of arrival by Transport Column Arnhem, and not only when that station was Arnhem itself but at Apeldoorn, Tiel, Ermelo-Veldwijk, Wolfheze, and so on.” ^[12]

An example is the transport on 10 December 1942 from the Haags Hervormd Rusthuis to Arnhem. 120 elderly people who could walk unaided, 50 seated and 30 bed-bound elderly, with a team of 45 personnel, left The Hague station at 09.55 hours. The planned time of arrival was 11.58 hours.^[13] The same day the Arnhem branch of the Red Cross took the same people to Oosterbeek where they were housed in two hotels, namely “Schoonoord” and “De Tafelberg”.

Transportation of Jews

Three raids were carried out by the Germans in Arnhem in which many Jews were picked up. They were sent by rail to the camp at Westerbork or at Vught. The first action was on 9 October 1941, when 10 people were arrested. The second was next year, in the evening of 10 December. This resulted in 346 people being transported to Westerbork the following day. The last raid occurred on 9 April 1943 when a large number of Jews were urgently required to report ‘voluntarily’ at the station. At least 572 people were transported as a result of these three actions. In between times small groups of people were being arrested at regular intervals and taken to Westerbork. Approximately 1,300 Jews were transported from Arnhem station.^[14]

Margo Klijn recorded a memory of Johan van der Kamp about the departure of the first group:

“At Hotel Haarhuis was a rounded-off corner, the street turned right towards the station, slightly uphill. They stood by the Dommering café: a long line of people. But we were not allowed to get any closer. They spent that night in a school in Utrechtseweg. (...) We dashed to Sonsbeek-singel. Don’t ask me why. We saw the train pass by. Of course it was pointless.”^[15]

Raids for the Arbeitseinsatz

Raids at Arnhem station were a regular occurrence in which young Dutch men were arrested to be sent to work in Germany. Mr H.M. Otten, at the time employed by the Arnheemsche Scheepsbouw Maatschappij NV (Arnhem Shipbuilding Company Ltd.), was arrested in June 1944:

“On the morning of 12 June 1944 I arrived by train in Arnhem at about quarter to eight. In the station concourse a German soldier with his rifle at the ready ordered me to stand against a wall with my hands up. There were a few other men next to me and still more joined us. Exactly how many I don't know.

Some time later the stopping train from Ede pulled in and I saw a colleague sitting in it. As he walked by I called out to him (Cor Eylander) and asked him to alert Otto Prins, the manager of A.S.M. (slipway). After about 45 minutes he turned up, and after a conversation with the soldiers he collected me.”[\[16\]](#)

Rail strike

On 17 September 1944 the order was received from the Dutch government in exile in London to implement a general rail strike. Within a few days the entire system (passenger and goods transport) was at a standstill. Using their own personnel and equipment the Germans took over the running of rail traffic which was in their military interest. In fact, from that moment rail travel was virtually restricted to night-time because allied aircraft made it almost impossible during daylight. A full moon also stopped night traffic, and trains only ran at daytime in the event of rain, mist or thick cloud. The rail strike was meant to support the allied Operation Market Garden offensive. When this operation faltered the strike simply continued. Many rail workers went into hiding.[\[17\]](#)

The Wehrmacht asked the Deutsche Reichsbahn (DRB – German State Railway) to take over the rail system at once, and the Reichsverkehrsministerium (State Transport Ministry) in Berlin immediately asked how many people would be needed to do this. The DRB had no list of names of NS staff in order to help them intervene in the strike. Therefore, the German measures against the strikers were disorganized and were carried out ad hoc. On Monday 18 September 1944 the DRB personnel were ordered to remain at their posts. One had to make an abrupt change from the role of supervision of the NS to the operation of their own company. This was made all the more difficult because, two weeks before, almost 1,000 German rail workers had left the Netherlands for their fatherland. The DRB authorities at the NS Utrecht asked for more locomotives and 4,500 extra personnel. These were not immediately available. In the meantime the 500 à 550 DRB staff was re-directed to the large stations on the major lines.[\[18\]](#)

The requested 4,500 DRB personnel arrived at the various stations at the end of September / beginning of October 1944. With approximately 5,000 German rail workers the system was kept running as an emergency railway company. There was a daily service of 30 trains in the Netherlands and 20 crossed the German border. A maximum speed of 35 kph applied.[\[19\]](#)

At the beginning of 1945 the Germans tried to break the strike. In the newspapers NS workers who returned to work were promised double pay, extra food and coal. The German propaganda assumed that the famine in the west of the country was entirely due to the strike. Furthermore, it was also evident that the German transport was not being hampered by the strike. Nevertheless, fewer than 1,000 to 1,500 Dutch railway workers throughout the Netherlands did not strike, many under pressure from the Germans.[\[20\]](#)

Prisoners

The rear of the Bolte's family plot (Utrechtseweg 48) bordered on the Arnhem station shunting yard. Mr Bep Bolte:

“And then all those trains came past carrying the people who had been taken prisoner and were being transported to Germany. They threw small notes from the train. Behind my house, at the rear, I had had a small set of steps made so that I could get down to the track. (.....) Corrie [Bolte's wife] had seen what was going on and took the dog for a walk alongside the track. She picked up the notes, which bore an address.”[\[21\]](#)

Bolte sent a short message to the address:

“ . . . then I wrote the address on, stuck on a stamp and posted it at another location, but never in Arnhem. And so the people received notification. We made no mention of the sender. You can understand, you didn't do that.”[\[22\]](#)

Damage to the station building

A message from the 'Dienststellenleider' (Service Unit Leader) of the Arbeitskommando Kampfkommandant Arnheim (formerly Technische Nooddienst - Technical Emergency Service), dated 13 April 1945, reported a fire at the station.

"In the evening of 12.4.1945 a fireman from 1 shift informed me that the station was on fire. I set off at once for La Cabine and tried to get the water supply in working order. However, this turned out to be very difficult since the water supply and Amsterdamscheweg were under shell fire. I then made a tour of the city and, apart from at the station, there was nothing of note happening. Because the station was under shell fire it was decided, after consultation with the Fire Chief, to send in 1 and 2 shifts. (...) At quarter to seven this morning I made a round through various streets (...) Station central building still burning moderately. (...) at quarter to nine a discussion in Schaarsbergen with Mr Jansen from the Arbeitskommando and Messrs van Dinter and Lamers, in which, alas, there appeared to be no other option but to wait, seeing that the shell fire was still intense and sending in the fire fighters was regarded as irresponsible." [23]

After the liberation the remains of the building were demolished and replaced by a new one. These premises too fell victim to the demolition hammer (2007), to be replaced by a temporary station



Grand-Hotel Oranje Nassau, entrance, 1945. (photo W.S. Jaquet; Gelders Archive, Photo collection Second World War, Folder 334)



The destroyed Grand-Hotel Oranje Nassau at Stationsplein, photographed by P.J. de Booy in 1945. (Gelders Archive Photo collection Second World War, negative B 1620/19-37)



Photographer W.S. Jaquet photographed various scenes at and around Stationsplein in 1945. (Gelders Archive, Photo collection Second World War, Folder 334)

Monuments

Two monuments were placed in the post-war station in remembrance of the Second World War, a plaque and the Phoenix.

The plaque was designed by Messrs Winkelman and Ir. H.G.J. Schelling, and was unveiled in 1969. The bronze memorial was raised in memory of fourteen NS personnel who died because of the hostilities during the years of occupation, namely: J. van Aalten, F.J. van Doodeweerd, J. Hermeling, J.A. Hoogveldt, G.R. Jansen, H. Kerkdijk, R. van Koppenhagen, A.J.M. van der Logt, P. Rozeboom, T. Schoemaker, J. Smit, E. Veenendaal, F.F. Verheijen and G.P.S. Willemsen. The inscription reads:

TER GEDACHTENIS AAN HEN DIE VIELEN 1940 - 1945

IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO FELL 1940 - 1945

Beneath the text is the list of names followed by an image of a winged wheel, the symbol of the NS at the time.

At the end of World War II the directors decided to commemorate the staff members who died by immortalizing their names on identical plaques. These were placed in the various stations in the district or area of the war victims. In the 2007 situation the Arnhem memorial can be found in the concourse at the most easterly entrance to the temporary station.

The Phoenix also stood in the 'old' station. This artwork was designed by Willem Reijers, and was unveiled in 1954. It is a gift from the municipality to the NS and symbolizes the rebuilding of Arnhem. When, in 1991, the railways replaced the Phoenix with a blue pillar as a 'meeting-point', the storm of protest from the local community which followed led the NS to return the sculpture to its place.

Since 2007 this work of art has been in storage at the council depot, awaiting the completion of the new station plans.

Notes

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- [1] C. Huurman, *Het spoorwegbedrijf in oorlogstijd, 1939-'45*. Published as number 35 in the Boekenreeks van de Nederlandse Vereniging van Belangstellenden in het Spoor- en tramwegwezen ('s-Hertogenbosch, 2001), 56.
- [2] J.W.H. van Ravensbergen is intended. (*Adresboek Arnhem en omstreken 1941*; Gelders Archive).
- [3] At the time G. Pijkeren lived at Noordelijke Parallelweg number 91. (*Adresboek Arnhem en omstreken 1941*; Gelders Archive).
- [4] Huurman, *Het spoorwegbedrijf in oorlogstijd, 1939-'45*, 59-60.
- [5] Ditto, 87.
- [6] *Text from a tape recorded conversation with E.A. Bolte*, NS supervisor, about his fate and (resistance) activities in the Second World War, 1-2. During the war Bolte lived at Utrechtseweg 48, opposite the Municipal Museum. The conversation took place on 3 June 1965 at his home, Bosweg 3 in Velp. Arnhem municipal archivist K. Schaap put most of the questions. Gelders Archive, Documentation collection Second World War, inventory number 150.
- [7] A.J. Veenendaal Jr. *De ijzeren weg in een land vol water. Beknopte geschiedenis van de spoorwegen in Nederland 1934-1958* (Amsterdam, 1998), 139.
- [8] Bart van der Boom, *Den Haag in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (1995), 117.
- [9] Ditto, 121-122.
- [10] Ditto, 122.
- [11] W.J. Lucardie, *De hulpverlening bij de evacuatieposten*. In: The Dutch Red Cross, the Official Organ of the Society of the Dutch Red Cross. 4th year No. 4, 1 April 1943, 73-74.
- [12] *Verslag van de Arnhemse Transport Colonne van het Nederlandse Roode Kruis voor, gedurende en na de 2e Wereldoorlog*. Gelders Archive, Documentation collection Second World War, inventory number 176.
- [13] Letter dated 4 December 1942 from the chief commissioner for the Transport of the Dutch Red Cross, W.J. Lucardie, to Jhr.Dr. J.N. van der Does of the Gelderland Branch of the Red Cross in Arnhem. Archive Board of Directors Dutch Red Cross, National Archive.
- [14] Cees Haverhoek, *Jodenvervolging in Arnhem tijdens de Duitse bezetting*. In: Arnhem The Most Enjoyable, 19th year, no 3, September 1999, 124-138.
- [15] Margo Klijn, *De stille slag : joodse Arnhemmers 1933-1945* (Westervoort, 2003), 188.
- [16] Letter from H.M. Otten to the Arnhem municipal archivist P.R.A. van Iddekinge, 30 September 1994. Gelders Archive, Documentation collection Second World War, inventory number 80.
- [17] Veenendaal, *De ijzeren weg in een land vol water*, 140-141.
- [18] Huurman, *Het spoorwegbedrijf in oorlogstijd 1939-'45*, 338.
- [19] Ditto, 343.
- [20] Ditto, 337-338.
- [21] *Text from a tape recorded conversation with E.A. Bolte*, 5.
- [22] Ditto, 6.
- [23] Gelders Archive, Documentation collection Second World War, inventory number 56.